INSCRIPTIONS OF AŚOKA



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Bull Capital of uninscribed Mauryan Pillar from Rampurva, now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.

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INSCRIPTIONS OF ASOKA

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PREFACE

Gautama the Buddha and the Maurya emperor Aśoka are two of the greatest sons of India and the world, and their lives and achievements stand among India's best contributions to human civilization.

The present English translation of the inscriptions of Aśoka, one of the most sincere followers of the Buddha, was undertaken at the request of the Buddha Jayanti Working Committee formed by the Government of India in connection with the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Lord's Mahā-Parinirvāṇa. The objective is to carry the message of Aśoka's edicts to the public. Although the translation closely follows the texts of the epigraphic records, it has been made slightly free so that it would be easily intelligible to the general reader. A sincere attempt has been made to present the author's meaning without slavishly adhering to mere expression. It was felt that a strictly literal translation might render the message of Aśoka difficult to understand at least for the class of readers, for which the book is intended. The same feeling also underlies the use of the Sanskrit forms of proper names, etc., in the translation of inscriptions which are couched in Prakrit.

The work has not been burdened with citation of references to authorities in support of any of the points raised, and difference of opinion among scholars on the interpretation of certain difficult words and passages occurring in the inscriptions has been indicated only in a few cases. But a small bibliography has been appended to the monograph with a view to helping the more inquisitive among the readers to pursue the study of the subject.

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The historical background of Aśoka's career and records has been summarily set forth in a short Introduction. The readers are expected to find in it the answers to some of the queries that may occur to them while going through the translation of the inscriptions. The classification of the epigraphs in this work has also been explained in it. An annotated list of personal and geographical names occurring in the records as well as Sanskritic expressions retained in the translations has been supplied in an Appendix for ready reference.

When an edict is found in different versions, generally one of the most well-preserved texts has been selected for translation and its findspot has been indicated in all cases. Only in a few cases, the texts of some other versions have been additionally translated, either in whole or in part. This is intended to draw the readers' attention to important variations in the different texts of an edict. None of Aśoka's edicts has been left out. A few records included in the monograph fall outside the category of edicts.

Aśoka explains the reason underlying the incision of his edicts on rocks and pillars of stone in the following passage :

> "This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me on stone for the following purpose, viz. that people may act according to it and that it may endure for a long time. And he who will act thus will do what is meritorious."—*Pillar Edict II.*

If the publication of the present work serves this noble purpose of that great soul even in the smallest degree, the translator will consider his labours amply rewarded.

Ootacamund,
Buddha Parinirvāna
Celebration Day,
May 24, 1956.

D. C. SIRCAR

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

INSCRIPTIONS OF AŚOKA—TRANSLATION

PART I—INSCRIPTIONS ON ROCKS

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PART II—INSCRIPTIONS ON PILLARS

APPENDICES

ILLUSTRATIONS

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I am never complacent in regard to my exertions or the dispatch of people's business by me......And whatever effort I make is made in order that I may discharge the debt I owe to all living beings. —*Rock Edict VI*

All men are my children. Just as, in regard to my own children, I desire that they may be provided with all kinds of welfare and happiness in this world and in the next, the same I desire in regard to all men.

—*Rock Edict XV*

The people of the unconquered territories lying beyond the borders of my dominions. ..should expect from me only happiness and no misery. —*Rock Edict XVI*

All religious sects should live harmoniously in all parts of my dominions. —*Rock Edict VII*

People should learn and respect the fundamentals of one another's Dharma...There should be a growth of the essentials of Dharma among men of all sects.

—*Rock Edict XII*

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INTRODUCTION

1. Magadha

The ancient country of Magadha comprised the present Patna and Gaya Districts in the southern part of Bihar. It was ruled by a king named Bimbisāra (546-494 B.C.) in the age of the Buddha (566-486 B.C. according to an old record, but 624-544 B.C. according to a tradition). He had his capital at the city of Rājagṛiha which was built by himself in the suburbs of Girivraja, the oldest capital of the kingdom of Magadha. Modern Rajgir in the Gaya District of Bihar stands on the site of ancient Rājagṛiha.

Of the numerous kingdoms and republican states flourishing in different parts of Bhāratavarsha during the age of the Buddha, only sixteen were regarded as Mahājanapadas or Great States, and Magadha was one of them. But, even before the Buddha's death, four out of the sixteen Great States became pre-eminent by steadily pursuing a policy of aggrandizement at the expense of their neighbours. Magadha was one of these four, the other three being the kingdoms of Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti. The capitals of these states were respectively at Śrāvasti (modern Set-Mahet on the borders of the Gonda and Bahraich Districts, Uttar Pradesh), Kauśāmbī (modern Kosam near Allahabad in U. P.) and Ujjayinī (modern Ujjain in West Malwa, Madhya Bharat).

It was Bimbisāra who laid the foundation of the greatness of Magadha which ultimately grew to be a gigantic empire comprising the major part of ancient Bhāratavarsha. He conquered the kingdom of Aṅga in the Monghyr-Bhagalpur region of East Bihar and annexed it to Magadha. His son and successor Ajātaśatru (494-462 B. C.) not only succeeded in extending his power over North Bihar by subduing the Vṛiji Republic which had its headquarters at Vaiśālī (modern Basarh in the Muzaffarpur District) but also in humbling the power of the mighty king of Kosala in a protracted war. In the meantime,

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the king of Avanti was also swelling in power as a result of his success against the neighbouring states including the kingdom of Vatsa. Now Magadha and Avanti stood face to face in a bid for the supremacy over Northern India.

While conducting military operations against North Bihar, Ajātaśatru fortified the village of Pāṭali at the junction of the Ganges and the Sone, near modern Patna. The city of Pāṭaliputra was built on the site by his son and successor Udayī (462-446 B. C.) about the year 459 B. C. The expansion of the kingdom now necessitated the transference of the capital of Magadha to the new city which was more centrally situated than Rājagṛiha.

In the last quarter of the fifth century B. C., the throne of Magadha passed to Śiśunāga (414-396 B. C.) who had been originally the viceroy of the later rulers of Bimbisāra's family at Vārāṇasī, i. e. modern Banaras in U. P. Śisunāga's outstanding contribution to the expansion of Magadha was the conquest and annexation of Avanti. Thus wide areas of North India were brought under the sway of Magadha. Shortly afterwards, the family of Śiśunāga was overthrown by Mahāpadma Nanda, founder of the Nanda dynasty.

Mahāpadma subdued most of the contemporary ruling powers in different parts of the country and extended his suzerainty over considerable areas of trans-Vindhyan India including the country of the Kaliṅgas. The last ruler of the Nanda family was on the throne when the celebrated Greek king Alexander (336-323 B. C.) of Macedon was leading his victorious campaigns in Afghanistan, the north-western areas of West Pakistan, the Punjab and Sind, all in the Uttarāpatha division of Bhāratavarsha. Ancient European writers speak of Palimbothra, i.e. Pāṭaliputra, as the capital of the said Nanda king who is represented as the lord of the Prasii and the Gangaridae. The Prasii were the peoples inhabiting the Eastern U. P., Bihar and North Bengal, while the Gangaridae, i. e. the Gangetic people, lived in the deltaic region of South Bengal watered by the mouths of the Ganges. The Gangaridae are identical with the Vaṅgas of early Indian literature.

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2. The Mauryas

Shortly after Alexander's departure from the north-western part of Bhāratavarsha in 325 B. C., the Nanda family was overthrown by Chandragupta (324-300 B. C.), founder of the Maurya dynasty. The Mauryas belonged to a Himalayan clan like such other peoples as the Lichchhavis of North Bihar and Nepal. With their gradual absorption in the Brahmanical society, they claimed the status of the Kshatriyas, although orthodox Brahmanists regarded them as no better than Śūdras.

Chandragupta was a general and a politician of remarkable ability. He succeeded not only in establishing his authority over the vast empire of the Nandas, with the only exception of the Kaliṅga country, but even in expelling the Greek lieutenants of Alexander and annexing the Punjab, the north-western areas of West Pakistan and Sind to his dominions. In 305 B. C. Chandragupta repulsed an attack of Seleucus Nicator who had been one of the generals of Alexander and become the lord of Western Asia sometime after the latter's death in 323 B. C. Seleucus contracted a matrimonial alliance with the Maurya emperor and ceded considerable areas of Afghanistan and Baluchistan to him.

Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleucus at Chandragupta's court, wrote a valuable account of what he saw in India, although only some fragments of this book have come down to us. According to the Greek ambassador, the administration of the Maurya empire was a highly centralized bureaucracy. The government was an absolute monarchy, in which the royal authority was supreme. This authority rested upon a huge standing army consisting of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants conducted by 36,000 men, and many thousands of chariots. Chandragupta's dominions appear to have extended from the Himalayas in the north to Mysore in the south and from Bengal in the east to the Arabian Sea and Afghanistan in the west. An inscription of 150 A. D. refers to his Rāshṭriya or governor stationed in Kathiawar. According to Jain traditions, he died at Sravana-Belgola in Mysore.

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Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusāra (300-272 B C.), known to the Greeks as Amitrochates or Amitraghāta. He succeeded in preserving the solidarity of the vast empire inherited from his father and maintaining friendly relations with the Greek king of Western Asia and the latter's neighbours.

3. Aśoka (272-232 B. C.)

Bindusāra died about 272 B C. and his throne passed to his illustrious son Aśoka whose coronation, however, took place four years later owing probably to a protracted struggle for succession. According to some traditions, Aśoka ruled for thirty-seven years possibly counted from the date of his coronation about 269 B. C. The empire of Aśoka was larger in extent than that of his father and grandfather as he succeeded in annexing the country of Kaliṅga in the coastal areas of Andhra and Orissa to the Maurya dominions. A tradition recorded by Hiuen-tsang in the seventh century A. D. suggests that Kanchipuram near Madras formed a part of Aśoka's empire.

A volume of information about Aśoka's career and exploits is available from literary traditions and his own records engraved on rocks and stone pillars.

The Gujarra and Maski versions of Minor Rock Edict I are the only two inscriptions of Aśoka, which refer to him by name. Elsewhere in his records, the emperor is generally mentioned as Devānāmpriya Priyadarśī Rājā, 'the king who is the beloved of the gods and who glances graciously upon all'. Sometimes he is called simply Devānāmpriya or king Priyadarśī. Literary tradition also often refers to Aśoka either as Priyadarśī or as Priyadarśana, 'one having an amiable appearance'. But some other ancient rulers, including certain members of Aśoka's family, are similarly known to have had the names Devānāmpriya and Priyadarśana. We do not know if Aśoka adopted the name Priyadarśī after his initiation into Buddhism with reference to his newly adopted policy of grace and impartiality. Tradition says that the fuller form of Aśoka's name was Aśokavardhana.

In his inscriptions, Aśoka is once represented as the king

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of Magadha which was the home province of the Maurya emperors, and the city of Pāṭaliputra is indirectly mentioned as his capital in a few cases. But, on several occasions, the inscriptions use a word meaning 'here' to indicate the royal household or the capital city or the entire dominions of Aśoka. In some cases, the empire is mentioned, in accordance with an ancient Indian convention, as either the Earth or Jambūdvīpa meaning the earth or its part containing Bhāratavarsha.

Other cities of the empire mentioned in the inscriptions are: Ujjayinī, Takshaśilā, Suvarṇagiri, Tosalī, Kauśāmbī, Samāpā and Isila, of which the first four were provincial headquarters where viceroys of the royal blood were stationed. It seems that Pāṭaliputra was the headquarters of the Prāchya and Madhyadeśa divisions of ancient Bhāratavarsha comprising the East Punjab, U. P., Bihar and Bengal. Ujjayinī, Takshaśilā (in the Rawalpindi District of the West Punjab) and Suvarṇagiri (near Erragudi in the Kurnool District of Andhra) appear to have been the headquarters respectively of the divisions called Aparānta or Paśchāddeśa in Western India, Uttarāpatha in the north-west, and Dakshiṇāpatha in the south. Tosalī, i. e. modern Dhauli near Bhubaneswar in the Puri District of Orissa, was the capital of the territory of Kaliṅga which was conquered by Aśoka in his ninth regnal year. Samāpā was an ancient town near the Jaugada hill in the Ganjam District of Orissa, while Isila was the old name of modern Siddapura in the Chitaldrug District of Mysore. According to the Junagarh inscription of A. D. 150, Aśoka's governor in Kathiawar was a Yavana or Greek prince named Tushāspha who was probably subordinate to the Prince Viceroy of Ujjayinī. According to tradition, Aśoka himself acted as his father's viceroy at both Ujjayinī and Takshaśilā. The inscriptions also mention certain Buddhist holy places visited by the emperor on pilgrimage. They include Lumbinīgrāma in the Nepalese Tarai and Sambodhi or Mahābodhi in the Gaya District of Bihar.

Of the peoples living within the dominions of Aśoka, mention is made in the inscriptions of the Yavanas, Kāmbojas, Bhojas, Rāshṭrikas, Paitryaṇikas, Andhras, Paulindas (Pulindas),

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Nābhakas and Nābhapaṅktis. Of these, the Yavanas or Greeks and the Kāmbojas inhabited parts of the wide area comprising Afghanistan and West Pakistan in ancient Uttarāpatha, while the Bhojas, Rāshṭrikas, Andhras and Pulindas lived in the Dakshiṇāpatha division to the south of the Vindhyas.

Aśoka's inscriptions sometimes also refer to the peoples living or territories lying outside the borders of his empire, and they are in one case characterised as 'unconquered'. Some of the territories lying outside Aśoka's dominions are specifically mentioned in the records. In the south, there were the country of the Choḍas or Cholas in the Tanjavur-Tiruchirappalli region and that of the Pāṇḍyas in the Madurai-Ramanthapuram-Tirunelveli area, both in the southern part of the Madras State. There were also the kingdoms of the Keralaputra and the Sātiyaputra, meaning the rulers of Kerala (in the Malayalam-speaking tract on the west coast of South India) and of a neighbouring land called Sātiya, as well as Tāmraparṇī or Ceylon further south. To the west of Aśoka's empire lay the kingdom of the Yavana or Greek king Antiyoka, i.e. Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B. C.) of Western Asia, and the terrtories of the latter's four neighbours, viz. Turamāya or Tulamāya, i. e. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.) of Egypt; Antekina or Antikini, i.e. Antigonas Gonatas (277-239 B.C.) of Macedonia; Makā or Magā, i. e. Magas (282-258 B. C.) of Cyrene in North Africa; and Alikasundara, i. e. Alexander of Epirus (272-255 B. C.) or of Corinth (252-244 B. C.).

The inscriptions often mention a class of high officers in Aśoka's service called the Mahāmātras. They were employed in various offices, e. g., as superintendents of the judicial affairs of a city, superintendents in charge of matters concerning the ladies of the royal household, officers in charge of the bordering districts of the empire, etc. Aśoka created a department of religious affairs which was conducted by certain officers of this class called the Dharma-Mahāmātras. The envoys possibly also belonged to the class of the Mahāmātras. Other high officers mentioned in Aśoka's records are the Prādeśikas, Rajjukas and Yuktas who were probably governors of a group

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of districts, of a single district, and of the sub-division of a district respectively. Another sub-divisional officer seems to have been the Rāshṭrika. A class of high functionaries under Aśoka are merely referred to as 'the officers' probably meaning special agents of the king. Among minor officers, mention is made of the reporters and scribes. The officers in charge of the royal cattle and pasture lands appear to have belonged to a higher class.

4. Aśoka's Dharma

The main theme of the edicts of Aśoka is what he calls the Dharma. In Minor Rock Edict III, the word is used in the sense of the Buddha's doctrine. But elsewhere it indicates a code of morals preached by Aśoka probably following what he believed to be teachings of the Buddha. There is indeed some similarity between Aśoka's teachings and the Buddha's instructions to a householder's son named Śṛigāla as found in the canonical work entitled *Dīghanikāya* (*Dīrghanikāya*).

Buddhist traditions represent Aśoka as converted to Buddhism as an Upāsaka, i.e. a lay follower of the Buddha, and as a patron of Buddhism. He is stated to have built the Aśokārāma at Pāṭaliputra and no less than 84,000 Buddhist monasteries in various cities within the empire. The inscriptions of Aśoka fully corroborate the tradition regarding his conversion to the Buddhist faith.

In several cases, Aśoka refers to the Buddha as 'the Lord' and in one case the Buddhist doctrine is mentioned as 'the True Faith'. In Minor Rock Edict I, he declares that, when the edict was issued, he had been an Upāsaka for more than two years and a half and in intimate association with the Saṅgha. i.e. the Buddhist Clergy, for more than a year. Minor Rock Edict III not only refers to his reverence for and faith in the Buddhist Trinity, i. e. the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, but also prescribes certain religious texts, selected by himself, for the study of the Buddhist monks and nuns as well as of the lay followers of the Buddha. Minor Pillar Edict I contains the text of his order to his officers to the effect that heretical monks and

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nuns should have to be expelled from the Saṅgha This attempt on Aśoka's part to preserve the unity of the Buddhist Church is also known from the Southern Buddnist traditions Rock Edict VIII and Pillar Inscriptions I-II speak of Aśoka's pilgrimage to such Buddhist holy places as Sambodhi, i. e. modern Bodhgayā where the Buddha obtained Bodhi, and Lumbinīgrāma where the Lord was born, as well as to the Stūpa built over the relics of the former Buddha Kanakamuni. The Kalsi and Dhauli rocks bear the figure of an elephant near the inscriptions of Aśoka, which is described respectively as 'the Best Elephant' and 'the White'. On the Girnar rock, the figure of the elephant is lost ; but the label speaks of 'the All-white Elephant named "the Procurer of Happiness for the Whole World".' There is no doubt that the white elephant in these cases is the Buddha, symbolically represented. It is well known that the Buddha was often indicated by the figure of an elephant in early Indian art.

According to Buddhist tradition, the king was originally known as Chaṇḍāśoka or the fierce Aśoka owing to his many evil deeds including the slaughter of his ninety-nine brothers ; but afterwards he became famous as Dharmāśoka or the pious Aśoka on account of his innumerable virtuous acts. This has been regarded by scholars as a fabrication due to the Buddnists' eagerness to emphasise the effect of one's conversion to their faith which they called 'the True Religion'. The story of the slaughter of all his brothers may not be true. But Rock Edict XIII clearly states how Aśoka became a thoroughly changed man shortly after the Kaliṅga war which took place eight years after his coronation, i. e. in his ninth regnal year. The horrors of the war induced him to give up the life of an ordinary Indian king which he had been leading and to become an advocate of non-violence and live the life of an exceptionally pious man and a social and religious reformer. Formerly, numerous animals and birds used to be killed in his kitchen for the preparation of curries ; he now confined this slaughter to two birds and one animal. He gave up the royal habit of going on hunting excursions and adopted the practice of going on tours of pilgrimage with a view to contacting the Brāhmaṇas and Śra-

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maṇas (Buddhist monks) and the aged for making gifts to them and also for imparting instructions in Dharma to the people of the countryside. His officers were also ordered to set out on tours periodically for the same purpose. He even advised his successors to give up the policy of conquering countries by arms and to try to conquer the hearts of the peoples of the neighbouring lands by means of benevolent activities and considered this to be the true conquest. As regards the peoples living outside the borders of his empire, Aśoka was prepared to pardon their offences that were pardonable. He was eager to win their confidence and to induce them to the practice of Dharma.

Aśoka was a patron of the Buddha's doctrine and was responsible for raising Buddhism from the status of a local sectarian creed of Eastern India to that of one of the principal religions of the world. But the Dharma he inculcated through his edicts is not identical with the doctrine we know from early Buddhist religious literature. He is conspicuously silent even on Nirvāṇa, the four Ārya-satyas and the Ashṭāṅgika-mārga and speaks only of the attainment of Svarga or heaven and happiness in the next world as the highest goal of human existence. This is striking in view of the fact that he repeatedly speaks of the Saṅgha or Buddhist Church and the Bhikshus or Śramaṇas, i.e. the Buddhist monks, and that he is known to have been well-acquainted with a number of Buddhist religious texts, some of which he prescribed not only for the lay followers of the Buddha but also for the monks and nuns. According to him, the attainment of heaven or happiness in the next world is possible for men to achieve only by practising and inducing others to practise what he calls the Dharma. Aśoka's Dharma has some resemblance with the Buddhism of the *Dhammapada* (*Dharmapada*), which is considered by some scholars to be somewhat earlier than the canonical form of Buddhism. But, if the *Dhammapada*, which is not silent on such aspects of Buddhism as Nirvāṇa, represents an earlier state of Buddhism, the edicts of Aśoka may represent a still earlier stage of the doctrine. Aśoka's teachings are confined essentially to a practical code of morals and are not based on any special dogma,

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either metaphysical or theological.

Aśoka understood a number of virtues to constitute his Dharma. These included the least amount of sin and the greatest amount of good done to others as well as compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity, gentleness and goodness. Good conduct, self-control, purity of thought, gratitude and firm devotion are extolled as also the absence of violence, cruelty, anger, vanity and jealousy. The following are some of the virtues strongly recommended by Aśoka on various occasions: obedience to parents, high personages, elders and the aged; liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives as well as to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas; abstention from the slaughter of and injury or cruelty to living beings; moderation in regard to expenditure and accumulation of wealth; proper courtesy to relatives, slaves and servants and the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas as well as to the aged, the poor and the distressed; reverence to elders, and courtesy and devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions, relatives, slaves and servants. The preaching of these virtues to others, which was recommended both to the poor and the rich, was regarded as highly meritorious. Aśoka preached the practice of these virtues, otherwise called the practices of Dharma, to all classes of people, no matter whether they lived within or outside his dominions. He believed that this would lead to their happiness in this world and in the next. But he realised that this was not possible to achieve without great effort. He also declared that fear of sin and love of and zeal for Dharma as well as self-examination and obedience to elders were required for reaching the goal.

It will be seen that Aśoka recommended compassion, reverence, sympathy and truthfulness and condemned cruelty, irreverence, intolerance and falsehood. The virtue on which he laid the greatest emphasis is the regard for the sanctity of life. The other two virtues almost equally emphasised are liberality and reverence to all persons deserving of it by reason of rank, age or station. He provided for amenities for animals just as for men and repeatedly advised people to be kind to

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them and issued orders prohibiting the slaughter of numerous species of birds and beasts including aquatic animals. He restricted the slaughter of birds and animals for the preparation of curries for his own household, and even banned festive gatherings in which meat was consumed by the people. Of course gatherings like synods for religious discussion, which involved no slaughter of animals, were allowed. Slaughter of and injury to animals were also generally prohibited on a number of specific days. The days specified were the three Chāturmāsīs (i. e. the full-moon days of the months of Āshāḍha, Kārttika and Phālguna) and the Tishya or Tishyā full-moon (in the month of Pausha), in each case together with the day immediately preceeding and following the full-moon, as well as the Buddhist fast days, i. e. the eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth of each fortnight of a month. The Tishya and Punarvasu constellations were regarded as specially sacred probably because the first was Aśoka's natal star and the second the star of his country, i. e. the home province of the Mauryas. Slaughter of animals in sacrifices in the capital city or in the royal household was also banned. He organised among various members of his household a regular system of giving grants to needy persons. In Minor Pillar Edict III, he advises his officers to register all gifts given by his second queen Chāruvākī, mother of Tīvara, specifically in her own name. According to a tradition, Aśoka gave everything that could be given to the Saṅgha and died destitute of power and possessions.

Aśoka acknowledged the traditional debt a king owes to his subjects in return of one-sixth for the produce of the fields levied from them as revenue. This of course meant affording them protection. But, in this connection, Aśoka repeatedly speaks of his desire to make the people happy in this world as well as in the next. He goes even further when he declares that his subjects of all sects and communities were his children. He introduced the system of dispatching people's business at all times and places. Although he was a Buddhist, his attitude was never to disparage other faiths and persecute

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the votaries of other creeds. Rock Edict XII speaks of his impartial consideration for all sects and his advice to the people of different religious sects and communities to respect one another's creeds. He was definitely against extolling one's own sect and disparaging other sects and recommended restraint of speech in this respect. He advised all classes of people to live together harmoniously in all parts of his empire. He also declared that what he wanted was the growth of the essential of their respective Dharma among all men. Such broadness of outlook is indeed remarkable. In Aśoka's opinion, people of all sects have the desire for self-control and purity of thought in common. In Pillar Edict VI, he refers to his eagerness to honour people of all sects. He felt that the honouring of other communities would lead to the glorification and promotion of Dharma as well as of all religious sects. He did not discriminate between the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas and his superintendents of religious affairs were occupied, according to Rock Edict V and Pillar Edict VII, with the welfare and happiness of all sects and communities like the Śūdras, Vaiśyas, Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas as well as the Śramaṇas, Ājīvikas and Nirgranthas (Jains). That he was true to this principle of impartial treatment is clearly demonstrated by two of the artificial caves in the Barabar hills in the Gaya District of Bihar, which were dedicated by him to the monks of the Ājīvika sect.

5. Benevolent Activities

Aśoka's declared policy, which was fully in accord with the Dharma he preached, was to see to the welfare and happiness not only of his subjects but also of the peoples of other lands beyond the borders of his empire, as if all men were his own children. In this matter, he did not make much difference even between men and animals.

He provided for the medical treatment of men and animals and caused the required medicinal herbs, roots and fruits to be imported and grown throughout his empire and also in many other countries beyond its borders especially towards the west and the south. He was responsible for planting banyan

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trees and mango groves along the roads, digging wells at intervals of every eight Krośas, and building sheds for supplying drinking water to men and animals. Within the first twenty-six years of his reign, he ordered the release of prisoners for no less than twenty-five times. According to Pillar Edict IV, he left the award of rewards and the infliction of punishment to the discretion of the governors of the districts in order to ensure impartiality in judicial proceedings. In Rock Edict XV, the judicial officers are advised to be free from jealousy, anger, cruelty, hastiness, want of perseverance, laziness and fatigue. He granted three days' respite to prisoners on whom the sentence of death had been passed. The intention was that, during that period, the relatives of the prisoners would plead for their lives to the officers by appealing to the latter's mercy or by adding fresh evidence in the convicts' favour, or by paying ransom for their release ; but, failing to secure the release of the prisoners by those means, the relatives would console them by observing fasts and giving gifts with a view to securing their happiness in the next world. All these measures were prompted by Aśoka's anxiety not only for the welfare and happiness of his subjects in this world but also for the popularisation of the practices of Dharma among the people so that they might attain happiness in the next world as well. His benevolent activities were counted by Aśoka as practices of Dharma and he hoped that people would emulate him in the performance of pious deeds. He claims that his propagation of Dharma led to such a considerable increase of virtue among the people that they were capable of associating themselves with the gods. He points out with satisfaction that the results obtained by him in this respect could not be achieved in the bygone ages, although pious kings then used to exhibit to the people representations of hell-fire and various celestial objects in order to rouse the people's fear of hell and desire for attaining heaven after death.

6. Propagation of Dharma

For the propagation of Dharma among all classes of the people in all parts of his vast empire, Aśoka caused his procla-

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mations to be engraved on stone pillars and rocks at various places, appointed officers called Dharma-Mahāmātras or the Superintendents of Dharma, and arranged for annual, triennial and quinquennial preaching tours of various classes of his officers. He himself undertook tours of pilgrimage for the same purpose. His Dharma-Mahāmātras busied themselves with all sects and communities of householders and ascetics including the followers of Brahmanism, the Buddhists, the Ājīvikas and the Nirgranthas or Jains. Aśoka himself as well as his officers imparted instructions in Dharma to the people whenever any occasion or opportunity offered itself. The Rajjukas were specially instructed for the purpose. Envoys were sent by Aśoka to many of the neighbouring countries to the west and the south for the propagation of the principles of Dharma as understood by him. Scholars have traced the influence of Buddhism in Western Asia, especially on the Manichaean religion, and this is regarded as the result of Aśoka's propagation of Dharma in that area. Buddhist traditions speak of Aśoka's missions to Ceylon and to Suvarṇabhūmi beyond the Bay of Bengal.

In Pillar Edict VI, Aśoka says that the practice of Dharma among men was promoted by him in two ways, viz. by imposing restrictions such as the prohibition of the slaughter of living beings and by exhorting people to live in accordance with the principles of Dharma. But he admits that the second of these two ways was very considerably more effective than the first. Thus Aśoka seems to be one of the few politicians of the world, who realised that propaganda is more important than legislation in matters relating to the people's inclinations and sentiments.

A characteristic of Aśoka is that he did not preach what he was not practising himself. That three lives were still being killed in his kitchen when Rock Edict I was issued is indeed a remarkable confession. His extraordinary candidness and love of truth did not permit him to go beyond the statement that many thousands of lives were being killed in his kitchen previously, that this slaughter was at the time restricted to three lives only, and that such slaughter would be

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completely stopped in future.

There is no doubt that Aśoka tried to be absolutely impartial in his dealings with different religious communities and never intended to wound the religious feelings of any of them. But he laid special emphasis on the sanctity of animal life and seems to have been against the slaughter of animals even in the name of religion. He was also critical of certain popular ceremonies. Some of his ordinances therefore may have been regarded by certain sects as an encroachment upon their natural right. Moreover the enforcement of the regulations was mostly in the hands of officials. It is difficult to believe that, in spite of their master's instructions, none of them went to excesses in their dealings with the people on occasions.

7. An Estimate of Asoka

Aśoka was a versatile genius and one of the most remarkable personalities in the history of the world. He was at the same time a great conqueror and builder, statesman and administrator, religious and social reformer, and philosopher and saint. His organization of missions for the spiritual conquest of the world was responsible for the transformation of a small sectarian creed into a world religion. He eschewed military conquests not after a defeat but after a great victory over the powerful people of Kaliṅga and pursued a policy of toleration in respect of the neighbouring states in spite of the vast resources of a mighty empire at his disposal. He was a man of exceptional energy, ability and power of organisation and his generosity and forbearance were matched only by his sincerity of purpose. Aśoka's piety and his liberal and impartial dealings with all his subjects irrespective of their caste and creed exercised an ennobling influence on the pious kings of India for many succeeding generations.

But the great empire-builders, who came before Aśoka and were responsible for the expansion of Magadha from a tiny state in South Bihar to a huge empire comprising the major parts of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, would have

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hardly approved of the latter's policy of turning officers of the State into religious propagandists, abolishing military exercises and conquests, leaving the turbulent tribesmen (especially of the north-west) to the care of the preachers of Dharma and draining out the resources of the empire in charity and religous propaganda, and would have branded it as the dream of an idealist rather than the sagacity of a practical politician. Indeed with the removal of the strong hand of Aśoka, his successors failed to check the disintegration of the empire and the transformation of the outlying provinces gradually into independent kingdoms. The military strength of Magadha, which under Chandragupta succeeded in hurling back the mighty battalions led by Seleucus, lord of Western Asia, was unable under Aśoka's descendants to check the onslaught of the Greek rulers of Bactria. The Bactrians succeeded in penetrating through the plains of North India as far as Pāṭaliputra in the east.

This, however, does not prove that Aśoka's policy of pacifism, like the attempts of some other religious leaders including the great Buddha to make the earth free from sorrow and strife, was a total failure. The two global wars of the first half of the twentieth century appear to have made it clear that after all Aśoka was right in denouncing the conquest of countries by arms and recommending the conquest of the hearts of mankind by love. He dreamt of a world in which all peoples would live in harmony like members of the same family. The day of the complete realization of that dream may be still far off. But it seems that we are gradually moving towards it.

8. Asoka's Inscriptions

The inscriptions of Aśoka are written in the Prakrit language. The alphabet used is Kharoshṭhī at Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi which lay in the north-western part of his empire, but Brāhmī elsewhere. Kharoshṭhī was a modification of the Aramaic script of Western Asia introduced in the Uttarāpatha division of Bhāratavarsha when thatarea was under the Achae-

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menians of Persia during the two centuries before Alexander's invasion. It was written from right to left. Kharoshṭhī died a natural death after some centuries as it was not quite suitable for writing Sanskrit or Prakrit. The Brāhmī alphabet seems to have derived from the prehistoric Indus Valley script of a semi-pictographic nature and was popular in the major part of Bhāratavarsha. It is not only the mother of all the alphabets of the Sanskritic and Dravidian languages prevalent in various parts of India today but is also the origin of many alphabets of South-East Asia including Tibetan, Ceylonese, Burmese and Javanese. Besides the records in Kharoshṭhī and Brāhmī, a fragmentary Aramaic inscription from Taxila in the Rawalpindi District of West Pakistan has been doubtfully ascribed to Aśoka.

Aśoka's inscriptions can be broadly divided into two classes, viz. those engraved on rocks and those incised on pillars of stone. The rock inscriptions fall into three groups, viz. Minor Rock Edicts, Rock Edicts, and Cave Inscriptions. The pillar inscriptions also may be classified under three subdivisions, viz. Minor Pillar Edicts, Pillar Inscriptions, and Pillar Edicts.

According to Pillar Edict VI, Aśoka began to issue edicts relating to Dharma twelve years after his coronation (269 B. C.) or in the thirteenth year of his reign, i.e. about 257 B. C. The Minor Rock Edicts were the earliest records issued by him. The Rock Edicts were issued shortly afterwards. Rock Edict XIII refers to the king's ninth regnal year (eight years after the coronation) and Rock Edict VIII to his eleventh regnal year (ten years after the coronation) in relation to certain earlier events in his career. Rock Edicts III-IV were issued in the thirteenth year (twelve years after the coronation) and Rock Edict V in the fourteenth year of Aśoka's reign (thirteen years after the coronation). Of the three cave inscriptions, the first and second were incised in the thirteenth regnal year (twelve years after the coronation) and the third in the twentieth regnal year (nineteen years after the coronation).

Among the pillar inscriptions, the Minor Pillar Edicts

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bear no date. The two Pillar Inscriptions were engraved in the twenty-first regnal year (twenty years after the coronation), although one of them refers to an event of the fifteenth regnal year of Aśoka (fourteen years after the coronation). Pillar Edicts I, IV, V and VI were issued in the king's twenty-seventh regnal year (twenty-six years after the coronation) and Pillar Edict VII in the twenty-eighth year of his reign (twenty-seven years after the coronation). Pillar Edict VI also refers to an earlier event of the thirteenth regnal year (twelve years after the coronation).*

9. Inscriptions on Rocks

Minor Rock Edicts :—A rock edict of Aśoka, not belonging to the well-known set of the Fourteen Rock Edicts discovered at so many places, has been found at the following localities :

1. Bairat in the Jaipur District, Rajasthan ;
2. Gavimath near Kopbal in the Raichur District, Hyderabad ;
3. Gujarra in the Datia District, Vindhya Pradesh ;
4. Maski in the Raichur District, Hyderabad ;
5. Palkigundu near Gavimath in the same District ;
6. Rupnath in the Jabalpur District, Madhya Pradesh ;
7. Sahasram in the Shahabad District, Bihar.

This record is usually known as a Minor Rock Edict. A peculiarity of the epigraph is that its text is not the same at all the places, some versions containing only about half the number of words as found in others. The same edict is also found at Brahmagiri, Jatinga-Ramesvara and Siddapura in the Chitaldrug District of Mysore, and at Erragudi and Rajula-Mandagiri in the Kurnool District of Andhra. But, at these places, a second edict is found to be added to the one known from the localities in North India and Hyderabad. The

* Some scholars believe that the dates in Aśoka's records are current years, so that eight years from the coronation would mean the eighth regnal year and not the ninth.

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text of this second record, known as Minor Rock Edict II, also offers a good deal of variation especially between the Mysore and Kurnool groups. The Mysore texts of the record have an introductory sentence saying that they were addressed to the Mahāmātras at Isila (i. e. modern Siddapura) in the words of the Āryaputra (probably a Viceroy who was one of Aśoka's own sons) and the Mahāmātras who were stationed at Suvarṇagiri, identified with modern Jonnagiri near Erragudi. At Bairat, a third Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka was also found besides the version of Minor Rock Edict I referred to above. The stone bearing this third edict is now preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. While Minor Rock Edicts I and II were addressed by Aśoka to his officers, Minor Rock Edict III was addressed to the Buddhist Clergy. The nature of this record is different from that of the other inscriptions of Aśoka.

Rock Edicts :—A series of Fourteen Rock Edicts of Aśoka was discovered at the following places :

1. Erragudi in the Kurnool District, Andhra;
2. Girnar near Junagarh in Saurashtra;
3. Kalsi in the Dehra Dun District, U. P.;
4. Mansehra in the Hazara District, West Pakistan;
5. Shahbazgarhi in the Peshawar District, West Pakistan;
6. Sopara in the Thana District, Bombay.

The preservation of the writing is unsatisfactory on many of the rocks. Only a fragment each of Rock Edicts VIII and IX was discovered in the neighbourhood of Sopara and the inscribed pieces of stone were carried to Bombay where they are at present preserved in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. The Girnar rock bears two other interesting records of later dates. These are Śaka Rudradāmā's inscription of A. D. 150 and Skandagupta's epigraph of A. D. 455-57. Both these inscriptions record the reconstruction of the dam of the Sudarśana lake ; but the earlier one, while recounting the past history of the lake, says how it was created by *Rāshṭriya* Pushyagupta during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya and how *Yavanarāja* Tushāspha endowed it with irrigational canals on behalf of Aśoka Maurya.

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The same edicts are also found at Dhauli in the Puri District and Jaugada in the Ganjam District, both in Orissa. But, at these places, two separate records occupy the place of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth edicts of the series as found elsewhere. These two edicts (Rock Edicts XV-XVI) were specially written for the people of Kaliṅga and the royal officers stationed in that country which was conquered by Aśoka in the ninth year of his reign. The hill, to which the Jaugada rock belongs, was known in ancient times as the Khepiṅgala-parvata.

Cave Inscriptions :—There are four artificial caves, three of them bearing inscriptions of Aśoka, in the Barabar hills, known in ancient times as the Skhalatika-parvata, about fifteen miles to the north of Gaya in Bihar. Two of these caves, as we know from the inscriptions, were dedicated by the king for the use of monks of the Ājīvika sect. There are three more artificial caves bearing inscriptions about a mile from the said caves in another part of the same hills, which is known as the Nagarjuni hill. They bear inscriptions of Aśoka's grandson Daśaratha, also styled 'Beloved of the Gods'. Like his grandfather, king Daśaratha also dedicated the caves in favour of the Ājīvika monks. The fourth cave near the three bearing Aśoka's inscriptions contains a record of the Maukhari prince Anantavarman who flourished in the fifth century A. D.

10. Inscriptions on Pillars

Minor Pillar Edicts :—Besides the well-known series of Six Pillar Edicts, the Allahabad pillar, originally set up at the ancient city of Kauśāmbī (modern Kosam) and hence often referred to as the Allahabad-Kosam pillar, contains two other edicts of Aśoka. The first of these two is also found on pillars at Sanchi in the Bhopal State and at Sarnath near Banaras in U.P. Unfortunately the writing on none of the pillars is satisfactorily preserved. The text of the edict as found at the three places offers a good deal of variation. The Sarnath text actually adds a new edict to the above, which we have called Minor Pillar Edict II. The second of the minor

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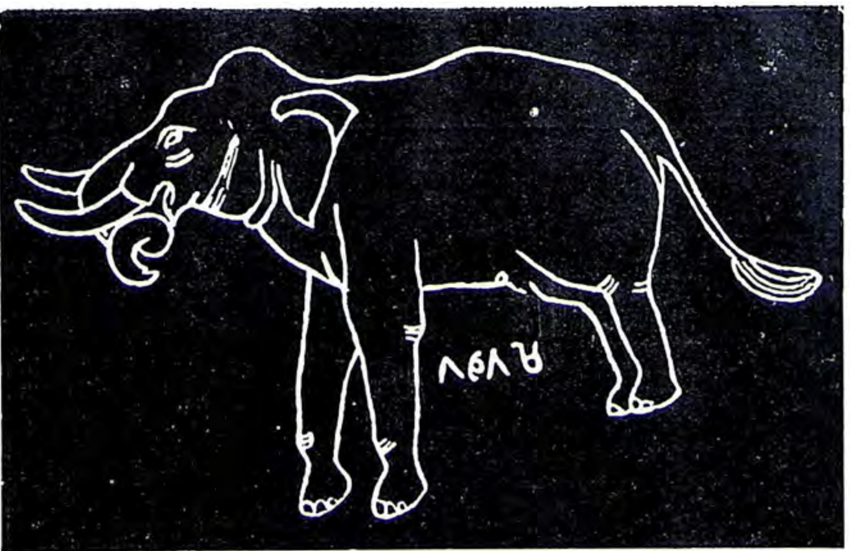


Figure of Elephant on the Kalsi Rock bearing the Brāhmī label *Gajatame* (Sanskrit *Gajatamaḥ*, i. e. *Gajottamaḥ*), 'the Best Elephant'. This is a symbolical representation of the Buddha.

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Topra Pillar brought from its original site to Delhi by Sultan Fīrūz Shāh (A. D. 1351-88). It now stands on the three-storied Koṭlā or citadel of Fīrūz Shāh outside the Delhi Gate to the south-east of modern Delhi.

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records on the Allahabad-Kosam pillar, which we have called Minor Pillar Edict III, is generally known as the Queen's Edict as it refers to the gifts made by one of Aśoka's queens.

Pillar Inscriptions :—There are two pillar inscriptions of Aśoka discovered in the Nepalese Tarai to the north of the Basti District of U. P. The first of these stands near the temple of Rummindei in the vicinity of the village of Parariya which is about two miles from the headquarters of the Bhagvanpur Tahsil in Nepal and about five miles from Dulha in the Basti District. The other inscribed pillar stands on the bank of a large tank called Nigali Sagar near the village of Nigḷiva, about thirteen miles to the north-west of Rummindei. These two inscriptions commemorate Aśoka's pilgrimage to the places in question. The first was a holy place owing to the fact that the Buddha was born there while the second contained a Stūpa enshrining the relics of Kanakamuni regarded by the Buddhists as one of the former Buddhas.

Pillar Edicts:—Monolithic stone pillars bearing a series of six edicts of Aśoka were found at Meerut and Allahabad in U. P. and at Lauriya-Araraj (near Radhia), Lauriya-Nandangarh (near Mathia) and Rampurva, all in the Champaran District of Bihar. The texts of the edicts on the different pillars are practically the same, although the preservation of the writing is unsatisfactory in many cases. Another pillar, originally found at Topra on the direct line between Ambala (the headquarters of the District of the same name in the East Punjab) and Sirsava, contains a seventh edict in addition to the said set of six. The Meerut and Topra pillars were brought to and set up at Delhi by Sulṭān Fīrūz Shāh (A.D.1351-88) of the Tughluq dynasty. As noted above, the Allahabad pillar was originally at Kauśāmbī, modern Kosam, about thirty miles from its present site, although we do not know when and by whom it was removed to Allahabad. Besides the set of six edicts, there are two other records of Aśoka on this pillar. These have been placed in the category of Minor Pillar Edicts and have already been referred to above. Another interesting

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inscription on the same pillar is the well-known eulogy of the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta who flourished in the fourth century A.D. The writing of many of the earlier records has been damaged by the incision of a number of late epigraphs. These are mostly private inscriptions of the nature of pilgrims' records; but there is also a Persian inscription of the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr (A. D. 1605-27).

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INSCRIPTIONS OF AŚOKA

(TRANSLATION)

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PART I

INSCRIPTIONS ON ROCKS

A.—MINOR ROCK EDICTS

No. I

[*Rupnath Text* :—This inscription offers one of the elaborate versions of the edict which was addressed to officers. Other versions of the record have been found at Bairat, Brahmagiri, Erragudi, Gavimath, Gujarra, Jatinga-Ramesvara, Maski, Palkigundu, Rajula-Mandagiri, Sahasram and Siddapura.]

Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods.

A little more than two years and a half have passed since I am avowedly a lay follower of the Buddha. But I was not vigorously exerting myself in the cause of Dharma for the first one year. However, it is a little more than a year that I am devoutly attached to the Saṅgha and exerting myself vigorously.

The gods, who were unmingled with the people inhabiting Jambūdvīpa during the ages down to the present time, have now been made by me mingled with them. This is indeed the result of my exertion in the cause of Dharma.

And this result is not to be achieved only by the people of superior position like myself; but even a poor man is as well able to attain the great heaven if he is zealous in the cause of Dharma.

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Now, this proclamation has been issued for the following purpose, viz. that both the poor and the rich may exert themselves, that even the people residing in the territories outside the borders of my dominions may realize this, and that this exertion on the part of the people may be of long duration. This cause will be made by me to progress more or less to one and half times.

And now, my officers, cause ye this matter to be engraved on stone wherever an opportunity presents itself. And, wherever there are stone pillars here in my dominions, this should be caused to be engraved on those pillars of stone.

And, with the implication of this proclamation in mind, you should go on tour everywhere throughout the district in your charge.

This proclamation is issued by me when I am on a tour of pilgrimage and have spent 256 nights away from the capital.

[*Maski Text*—This inscription offers an abridged version of the same edict.]

This is a proclamation of Aśoka, Beloved of the Gods.

It is now more than two years and a half that I am a lay follower of the Buddha. It is again more than a year now that I am devoutly attached to the Saṅgha and devoted to exertion for the sake of Dharma. In Jambūdvīpa, the gods, who were formerly unmingled with men, have now become mingled with them.

This object, gained by me, can be achieved even

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by a poor man if he is devoted to Dharma. One should not consider that the rich alone can achieve this object. The poor and the rich should both be told : 'If you act in this manner, this laudable achievement will last for a long time and thus increase to one and half times.'

[*Gujarra Text*]

This is a proclamation of Priyadarśī Aśokarāja, Beloved of the Gods.

I have been now a lay follower of the Buddha for two and half years.

Saith he, "It is now more than a year that the Saṅgha has been intimately associated with me and that I have been exerting myself in the cause of Dharma."

During this period, Devānāmpriya's subjects in Jambūdvīpa, who had been unmingled with gods, were made by him mingled with them. This is the result of his exertion in the cause of Dharma. It is not that this result can be obtained by the rich man alone. Even the poor man, if he exerts himself in the cause of Dharma, practices the duties associated with Dharma and observes restraint in respect of living beings, can attain the great heaven.

This proclamation is issued by the king for this following purpose.

Let both the poor and the rich practise the duties associated with Dharma and effect thereby their association with gods. Let the peoples living beyond the borders of his empire also know that the

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practice of duties associated with Dharma should further increase. This matter will increase if people practice the duties associated with this very Dharma to a considerable degree.*

And this proclamation is issued by the king when he has been on tour and spent 256 nights away from the capital.

No. II

[*Brahmagiri Text*.—This is in continuation of Rock Edict I. Other versions of the edict have been found at Erragudi, Jatinga-Ramesvara, Rajula-Mandagiri and Siddapura. The Brahmagiri, Jatinga-Ramesvara and Siddapura texts of Minor Rock Edicts I and II are practically the same.]

Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods with reference to the above.

One should obey one's mother and father and likewise one's elders. One should be steadfast in one's kindness towards living beings. One should speak the truth. In this way, one should propound these attributes of Dharma.

In the same way, the pupil should honour his teacher and this practice should be established by one in the proper manner among one's relations. This is an ancient rule and the principle is long-standing. One should act in this way.

This record is written by the scribe named Chapala.

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* Some letters in this section are damaged and have to be restored conjecturally with the help of other versions.

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[*Erragudi Text.*—This is a slightly bigger version of the edict. The Erragudi and Rajula-Mandagiri texts of the record are practically the same.]

Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods.

You should act as instructed by the Beloved of the Gods. You should order the Rajjukas and the Rajjukas in their turn shall order the people of the countryside as well as the local officers called Rāshṭrika in the following words : 'Mother and father are to be obeyed. And similarly elders are to be obeyed. Living beings should be treated with kindness. Truth must be spoken. These attributes of Dharma are to be propounded.' Thus you should order in the words of the Beloved of the Gods.

You should order in the same way the elephant-riders, scribes, charioteers and teachers of the Brāhmaṇa community in the following words : 'You should instruct your pupils in accordance with what is the ancient usage. This instruction should be obeyed. Whatever honour is enjoyed by the teacher lies really in this. Then again, the principle underlying these instructions should be established in the proper manner among the teacher's female relations by the male relatives he may have. This principle should also be established by them among their own pupils according to the old usage. You should thus guide and instruct your pupils in the proper way, so that the said principle grows among them abundantly.'

This is the order of the Beloved of the Gods.

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No. III

[A separate stone bearing this edict was discovered at Bairat and is now preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. This record has not been found anywhere else.]

King Priyadarśī of Magadha salutes the monks of the Saṅgha, wishes them good health and comfort in their movement, and addresses them in the following words.

It is known to you, Venerable Sirs, how far extends my reverence for and faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha. Whatever, Venerable Sirs, has been said by the Lord Buddha, all that is well-said. But, Venerable Sirs, I deem it proper to speak out what appears to me the way as to how the true Dharma may be of long duration.

I desire, Venerable Sirs, that the largest number of monks and nuns should constantly listen to and reflect on the following which are the texts of Dharma* :

Vinayasamutkarshaḥ or the Exaltation of Discipline ;

Āryavāsāḥ or the Noble States of Living ;

Anāgatabhayāni or the Fears to Come ;

Munigāthā or the Song of the Hermit ;

Mauneyasūtram or the Discourse on the State of a Hermit ;

Upatishyapraśnaḥ or the Questions of Upatishya ; and

*There is difference of opinion among scholars on the identification of these religious texts.

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Rāhulāvavādaḥ or the Exhortation to Rāhula, which was delivered by the Lord on the subject of falsehood.

In the same way, the lay followers of the Buddha, both male and female, should listen to and reflect on the sacred texts.

This record, Venerable Sirs, is caused to be written by me for the following purpose, viz. that people may know my intention.

B—ROCK EDICTS

No. I

[*Girnar Text*—Other versions of Rock Edicts I-XIV are found at Erragudi, Kalsi, Mansehra and Shahbazgarhi. Only fragments of Rock Edicts VIII and IX have been discovered at Sopara. Rock Edicts I-X and XIV have also been found at Dhauli and Jaugada. At these places, two special records (Rock Edicts XV and XVI) take the place of Rock Edicts XI-XIII.]

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Here no living being should be slaughtered for sacrifice and no festive gathering should be held. For king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, sees manifold evil in festive gatherings. There is, however, one kind of festive gathering which is considered good by king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Many hundred thousands of living beings were

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formerly slaughtered every day in the kitchen of Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, for the sake of curry. But now, when this record relating to Dharma is written, only three living creatures are killed daily for the sake of curry, viz. two birds and one animal.* Even this animal is also not slaughtered regularly. These three living beings too shall not be killed in future.

No. II

[*Girnar Text*]

Everywhere in the dominions of king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, and likewise in the bordering territories such as those of the Choḍas and Pāṇḍyas as well as of the Sātiyaputra and the Keralaputra as far south as Tāmraparṇī, and in the territories of the Yavana king Antiyoka and also the kings who are the neighbours of the said Antiyoka—everywhere king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, has arranged for two kinds of medical treatment, viz. medical treatment for men and medical treatment for animals. And, wherever there were no medicinal herbs beneficial to men and animals, everywhere they have been caused to be imported and planted. Wherever there were no roots and fruits, everywhere they have been caused to be imported and planted. On the roads, wells have been caused to be dug and trees have been caused to be planted for the enjoyment of animals and men.

* This passage in the original is generally taken to mean 'two peacocks and one deer.'

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No. III

[*Girnar Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

The following was ordered by me twelve years after my coronation.

Everywhere in my dominions, the Yuktas, Rajjukas and Prādeśikas shall set out every five years on a circuit for inspection throughout their charges, as much for their other duties as for the special purpose of preaching Dharma in the following words :

'Meritorious is obedience to mother and father. Meritorious is liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives and to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas. Meritorious is abstention from the slaughter of living beings. Meritorious is to spend little and store little.'

The Council of Ministers shall order the Yuktas about the observance of these instructions with reference to both my intention and my words.

No. IV

[*Girnar Text*]

In times past, for many hundreds of years, slaughter of life, cruelty to living creatures, disrespect to relatives and disrespect to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas increased indeed. But now, as a result of the practice of Dharma on the part of king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, every proclamation by the beating of drums has become the

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proclamation of Dharma. Abstention from the slaughter of life, absence of cruelty to living creatures, seemly behaviour to relatives, seemly behaviour to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas, obedience to mother and father, and obedience to the aged have increased now owing to the instruction in Dharma imparted by king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, to such a degree as was not possible to achieve for many hundreds of years in the past by means of showing to the people the representations of celestial cars and celestial elephants, masses of hell-fire as well as many other heavenly forms. The practices of Dharma of the above kind as also of various other kinds have increased and king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, will cause such practices of Dharma to increase still more. Further, the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, will promote this practice of Dharma till the time of universal destruction and, themselves abiding by Dharma and good conduct, will instruct people in Dharma.

Verily, instruction in Dharma is considered by me to be my supreme duty. But the practice of Dharma is not possible for a person devoid of good conduct. In the matter of Dharma, an increase is good as also its non-decrease.

This record has been caused to be written for the following purpose, viz. that the promotion of Dharma should be adhered to and that no decrease of it should be countenanced.

This record has been caused to be written by king Priyadarśī, twelve years after his coronation.

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No. V

[*Mansehra Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśi, Beloved of the Gods.

It is difficult to do good to others. He who starts doing good to others accomplishes what is difficult indeed. Many a good deed has, however, been performed by me. And, among my sons and grandsons and the generations coming after them till the destruction of the world, those who will follow this course will do an act of merit. But whosoever amongst them will abandon even a part of it will do an act of demerit. It is indeed easy to commit sin.

In the ages gone by, there were no officers called Dharma-Mahāmātra. So I created the posts of Dharma-Mahāmātras thirteen years after my coronation. These officers are occupied with all the religious sects for the establishment of Dharma and for the promotion of Dharma as well as for the welfare and happiness of those who are devoted to Dharma even among the Yavanas, Kāmbojas and Gandhāras, the Rāshṭrikas and Paitryaṇikas and the other peoples dwelling about the western borders of my dominions. They are occupied not only with the welfare and happiness of the servile class and the community of traders and agriculturists as well as the Brāhmaṇas and the ruling class and likewise of the destitute and the aged, but also with the release of the devotees of Dharma amongst them from fetters. They are similarly engaged with the fettered persons in the prisons for the distribution

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of money to those amongst them who are encumbered with progeny, for the unfettering of those who have committed crimes under the instigation of others, and for the release of those who are aged. They are engaged everywhere—here* and elsewhere in all the towns, in the households of my brothers and sisters and other relatives. These Dharma-Mahāmātras are engaged everywhere in my dominions among people devoted to Dharma to determine whether a person is only inclined towards Dharma or is fully established in Dharma or is given to charity.

This record relating to Dharma has been written on stone for the following purpose, viz. that it may last for a long time and that my descendants may conform to it.

No. VI

[*Girnar Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśi, Beloved of the Gods.

Formerly, in the ages gone by, there was no transaction of state business and no reporting of incidents at all hours. So I have made the following arrangement, viz. that the reporters may appear before me for reporting the affairs of the people at any time and place, whether I am engaged in eating or in the harem or in the bed-chamber or on a promenade or in the carriage or on the march†. And I am now attending to people's

* The Girnar version has 'at Pāṭliputra' in the place of this word.

† This expression in the original is generally taken to mean 'in the pleasure gardens'.

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affairs at all places. And, when I issue an order orally in connection with any donation or proclamation or when an emergent work presses itself upon the Mahāmātras and in case there is in that connection a controversy among the Ministers of the Council or an argumentation in the Council in favour of a particular view, the fact must be reported to me immediately at any place and at any time. Thus have I ordered.

I am never complacent in regard to my exertions or the dispatch of people's business by me. I consider it my only duty to promote the welfare of all men. But exertion and prompt dispatch of business lie at the root of that. There is verily no duty which is more important to me than promoting the welfare of all men. And whatever effort I make is made in order that I may discharge the debt which I owe to all living beings, that I may make them happy in this world, and that hey may attain heaven in the next world.

Therefore this record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me on stone for the following purpose, viz. that it may last for a long time and that my sons, grandsons and great-grandsons may conform to it for the welfare of all men. This, however, is difficult to accomplish without the utmost exertion.

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No. VII

[*Shahbazgarhi Text*]

King Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, wishes that all religious sects should live harmoniously in all parts of his dominions. In fact, all of them desire to achieve self-control and purity of thought. People, however, are of diverse inclinations and diverse passions. They will perform either the whole or only a part of their duty. However, even if a person practises great liberality but does not possess self-control, purity of thought, gratitude and firm devotion, he is quite worthless.

No. VIII

[*Girnar Text*]

In the ages gone by, kings used to go out on tours of pleasure. During such tours, hunting and other pastimes used to be enjoyed by them.

Now, king Priyadarsi, Beloved of the Gods, visited Sambodhi ten years after his coronation. Thence started these pilgrimages for Dharma. During these pilgrimages, the following take place, viz. visiting the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas and making gifts to them, meeting the aged and making provision of money for them, and contacting the people of the countryside, instructing them in Dharma and discussing with them the principles of Dharma, all this being conducive to the promotion of Dharma.

This is the supreme delight of king Priyadarsi, Beloved of the Gods. All his other pleasures are inferior to this.

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Rock Edict VII (Kharoshṭhī) at Shahbazgarhi. The lines read from right to left as follows :

1 Devanaṁpriyo Priyaśi raja savratra ichhati savra
2 prashaṁda vaseyu sayc-m te sayame bhavaśudhi cha ichhaṁti
3 jano chu uchavuchachhamdo uchavucharago te savraṁ ekadeśam va
4 pi kashaṁti vipule pi chu dane yasa nasti sayama bhava
5 śudhi kiṭranata ariḍhabhatita nicha paḍhaṁ

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Brāhmī Inscription on the Rummindei Pillar. The lines read from left to right as follows :

1 Devānampiyena Piyadasina lājina vīsativasābhisitena
2 atana āgācha mahīyite hida Budhe jāte Sakyamunīti
3 silāvigaḍabhīchā kālāpita silāṭhabhe cha usapāpite
4 hida Bhagavam jāte ti Lumminigāme ubalike kaṭe
5 aṭhabhāgiye ḍha

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[*Mansehra Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

People perform various auspicious ceremonies on the occasions of illness, the weddings of sons, the weddings of daughters, the birth of children and the setting out on journeys. On these and similar other occasions, people perform many auspicious ceremonies. And, on such occasions, the women-folk in particular perform many and diverse ceremonies which are trivial and meaningless.

Auspicious rites, however, should certainly be performed. But the said kinds of rites in fact produce meagre results. On the other hand, such ceremonies as are associated with Dharma produce great results. These comprise the following, viz. proper courtesy to slaves and servants, reverence to elders, restraint in one's dealings with living beings and liberality to the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas. These and similar other virtues are indeed the ceremonies of Dharma.

Therefore, whether one is a person's father, or son, or brother, or master, or friend or aquaintance, or even a mere neighbour, one ought to declare to him : 'This kind of rite is good. One should observe this practice until one's desired object is attained and resolve that the practice will be observed again and again even after the object is attained.'

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The other kinds of auspicious ceremonies, referred to above, are indeed of dubious value. Perchance a person may attain his object by performing those ceremonies, perchance he may not. Moreover, performance of those ceremonies may produce results in this world only. But the said rites of Dharma are not restricted to time. If a person performs them but does not attain his object in this world, even then endless merit for him is produced by them in the next world. And, if a person attains his object in this world, both the results are obtained by him, viz. the desired object is attained in this world as also endless merit is produced for him in the next world by those ceremonies of Dharma.

[*Girnar Text.—Concluding Part*]

Further, it has also been said: 'Gifts are meritorious.' But there is no such gift or favour as the gift of Dharma or the favour relating to Dharma. Therefore, whether one is a person's friend, or well-wisher, or relative, or companion, one should advise him on different occasions: 'This ought to be done. This is meritorious. By this practice alone it is possible to attain heaven.' And what is a greater achievement than this, viz. the attainment of heaven?

No. X

[*Girnar Text*]

King Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, does not consider either glory in this life or fame after death as of great consequence, except in regard to the

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following, viz. that, at present as well as in future, the people of his dominions would practise obedience to Dharma and also that they would act in accordance with the principles of Dharma. On this account alone, king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, desires glory and fame.

Whatever endeavours are made by king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, all those are made for the sake of the people's happiness in the other world and in order that all men should have little corruption. And, what is sinful is corruption. This comparative freedom from corruption is indeed difficult to achieve both for the poor and the rich if they do not make great efforts by renouncing every other aim. This is certainly more difficult for the rich to achieve.

No. XI

[*Kalsi Text*—This edict is not found at Dhauli and Jaugada.]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

There is no such gift as the gift of Dharma, no such act of dividing as the separation of Dharma from what is not Dharma, and no such kinship as kinship through Dharma.* These comprise the following, viz. proper courtesy to slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives as well as to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas, and abstention from the slaughter of living beings.

*Some versions add 'acquaintance through Dharma' to the list.

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In respect of this, whether one is a person's father, or son, or brother, or master, or friend, or acquaintance, one ought to say to him : 'This is meritorious. This ought to be done.' If he acts in this manner, happiness in this world is attained by him and endless merit is produced for him in the next world by the said gift of Dharma.

No. XII

[*Shahbazgarhi Text*—This edict is not found at Dhauli and Jaugada.]

King Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, honours men of all religious communities with gifts and with honours of various kinds, irrespective of whether they are ascetics or householders. But the Beloved of the Gods does not value either the offering of gifts or the honouring of people so highly as the following, viz. that there should be a growth of the essentials of Dharma among men of all sects.

And the growth of the essentials of Dharma is possible in many ways. But its root lies in restraint in regard to speech, which means that there should be no extolment of one's own sect or disparagement of other sects on inappropriate occasions and that it should be moderate in every case even on appropriate occasions. On the contrary, other sects should be duly honoured in every way on all occasions.

If a person acts in this way, he not only promotes his own sect but also benefits other sects. But, if a person acts otherwise, he not only injures his own sect but also harms other sects. Truly, if a person extols his own sect and disparages other sects with a view to glorifying his sect owing merely to his at-

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tachment to it, he injures his own sect very severely by acting in that way. Therefore restraint* in regard to speech is commendable, because people should learn and respect the fundamentals of one another's Dharma.

This indeed is the desire of the Beloved of the Gods that persons of all sects become well-informed about the doctrines of different religions and acquire pure knowledge. And those who are attached to their respective sects should be informed as follows: 'The Beloved of the Gods does not value either the offering of gifts or the honouring of people so highly as the following, viz. that there should be a growth of the essentials of Dharma among men of all sects.'

Indeed many of my officers are engaged for the realization of the said end, such as the Mahāmātras in charge of the affairs relating to Dharma, the Mahāmātras who are superintendents of matters relating to the ladies of the royal household, the officers in charge of my cattle and pasture lands, and other classes of officials. And the result of their activities, as expected by me, is the promotion of each one's sect and the glorification of Dharma.

No. XIII

[*Shahbazgarhi Text*—This edict is not found at Dhauli and Jaugada.]

The country of the Kaliṅgas was conquered by

*Other versions have a different expression which is generally taken to stand for Sanskrit *samavaya* meaning 'concord'. It may, however, also suggest Sanskrit *sāmavāda* meaning 'restrained speech' which is apparently intended by the word used in the present text.

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king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, eight years after his coronation. In this war in Kaliṅga, men and animals numbering one hundred and fifty thousands were carried away captive from that country, as many as one hundred thousands were killed there in action, and many times that number perished. After that, now that the country of the Kaliṅgas has been conquered, the Beloved of the Gods is devoted to an intense practice of the duties relating to Dharma*, to a longing for Dharma and to the inculcation of Dharma among the people. This is due to the repentance of the Beloved of the Gods on having conquered the country of the Kaliṅgas.

Verily the slaughter, death and deportation of men, which take place in the course of the conquest of an unconquered country, are now considered extremely painful and deplorable by the Beloved of the Gods. But what is considered even more deplorable by the Beloved of the Gods is the fact that injury to or slaughter or deportation of the beloved ones falls to the lot of the Brāhmaṇas, the Śramaṇas, the adherents of other sects and the householders, who live in that country and among whom are established such virtues as obedience to superior personages, obedience to mother and father, obedience to elders and proper courtesy and firm devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions and relatives as well as to slaves and servants. And, if misfortune befalls the friends, acquaintances, companions and relatives of persons who are full

*Other versions have 'zealous discussion of Dharma'.

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of affection towards the former, even though they are themselves well provided for, the said misfortune as well becomes an injury to their own selves. In war, this fate is shared by all classes of men and is considered deplorable by the Beloved of the Gods.

Now, really there is no person who is not sincerely devoted to a particular religious sect.* Therefore the slaughter, death or deportation of even a hundredth or thousandth part of all those people who were slain or died or were carried away captive at that time in Kaliṅga, is now considered very deplorable by the Beloved of the Gods.

Now the Beloved of the Gods thinks that, even if a person should wrong him, the offence would be forgiven if it is possible to forgive it. And the forest-folk who live in the dominions of the Beloved of the Gods, even them he entreats and exhorts in regard to their duty. It is hereby explained to them that, in spite of his repentance, the Beloved of the Gods possesses power enough to punish them for their crimes, so that they should turn from evil ways and would not be killed for their crimes. Verily the Beloved of the Gods desires the following in respect of all creatures, viz. non-injury to them, restraint in dealing with them, and impartiality in the case of crimes committed by them.

* This has been put differently in other versions. The Kalsi text, e. g., has: 'Excepting the country of the Yavanas, there is no country where these two classes, viz. the Brāhmaṇas and the Sramanas, do not exist; and there is no place in any country where men are not indeed sincerely devoted to one sect or other.'

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So, what is conquest through Dharma is now considered to be the best conquest by the Beloved of the Gods. And such a conquest has been achieved by the Beloved of the Gods not only here in his own dominions but also in the territories bordering on his dominions, as far away as at the distance of six hundred Yojanas, where the Yavana king named Antiyoka is ruling and where, beyond the kingdom of the said Antiyoka, four other kings named Turamāya, Antikini, Makā and Alikasundara are also ruling, and, towards the south, where the Choḍas and Pāṇḍyas are living as far as Tāmraparṇī. Likewise here in the dominions of His Majesty, the Beloved of the Gods—in the countries of the Yavanas and Kāmbojas, of the Nābhakas and Nābhapaṅktis, of the Bhojas and Paitryaṇikas and of the Andhras and Paulindas—everywhere people are conforming to the instructions in Dharma imparted by the Beloved of the Gods.

Even where the envoys of the Beloved of the Gods have not penetrated, there too men have heard of the practices of Dharma and the ordinances issued and the instructions in Dharma imparted by the Beloved of the Gods, and are conforming to Dharma and will continue to conform to it.

So, whatever conquest is achieved in this way, verily that conquest creates an atmosphere of satisfaction everywhere both among the victors and the vanquished. In the conquest through Dharma, satisfaction is derived by both the parties. But that satisfaction is indeed of little consequence. Only

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happiness of the people in the next world is what is regarded by the Beloved of the Gods as a great thing resulting from such a conquest.

And this record relating to Dharma has been written on stone for the following purpose, viz. that my sons and great-grandsons should not think of a fresh conquest by arms as worth achieving, that they should adopt the policy of forbearance and light punishment towards the vanquished even if they conquer a people by arms, and that they should regard the conquest through Dharma as the true conquest. Such a conquest brings happiness to all concerned both in this world and in the next. And let all their intense joys be what is pleasure associated with Dharma. For this brings happiness in this world as well as in the next.

No. XIV

[*Girnar Text*]

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

In the series of records, there are, for sooth, texts written in a concise form,or in a medium form, or in an elaborate form. And all the items of the series have not been put together in all places. For my dominions are wide and much has been written and I shall certainly cause still more to be written.

There are some topics which have been repeated over and over again owing to their sweetness, so that people may act accordingly. There may be

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some topics which have been written incompletely either as the particular place of a record was considered unsuitable for them or as a special reason for abridgment was believed to exist, and also owing to a fault of the scribe.

No. XV

[*Dhauli Text*—This edict is only found at Dhauli and Jaugada. This is the first of the two records found at these two localities in the place of Rock Edicts XI-XIII of the series occurring elsewhere.]

The Mahāmātras of Tosalī, who are the judicial officers of the city, have to be addressed in the following words of the Beloved of the Gods.

As regards whatever good I notice, I desire that I may carry it out by deeds and accomplish it by proper means. And I consider the following to be the principal means to this end, viz. to impart instructions to you. For you are placed by me over many thousands of beings with the object that I may gain the affection of all men.

All men are my children. Just as, in regard to my own children, I desire that they may be provided with all kinds of welfare and happiness in this world and in the next, the same I desire also in regard to all men. But you do not understand how far my intention goes in this respect. A few amongst you per chance understand it ; but even such of you understand it partly and not fully. Howsoever well-placed you may be, you have to pay attention to this matter.

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In the administration of justice, it sometimes happens that some persons suffer imprisonment or harsh treatment. In such cases, a person may accidentally obtain an order cancelling his imprisonment, while many other persons in the same condition continue to suffer for a long time. In such a circumstance, you should so desire as to deal with all of them impartially.

But an officer fails to act impartially owing to the following dispositions, viz. jealousy, anger, cruelty, hastiness, want of perseverence, laziness and fatigue. Therefore you should desire that these dispositions may not be yours. And the root of the complete' success of an officer lies in the absence of anger and avoidance of hastiness. In the matter of administration of justice, an officer does not get up for work if he is fatigued ; but he has to move, to walk and to advance. Whoever amongst you pays attention to this should tell other officers : 'Pay attention to nothing except the duties assigned to you by the king. Such and such are the instructions of the Beloved of the Gods.' The observance of this duty will produce great results for you ; but its non-observance will produce great harm.

For, if you fail to observe this, there will be for you neither the attainment of heaven nor the attainment of the king's favour. Because indifferent observance of this duty on your part cannot make me excessively energetic in favouring you. If, however, you observe this duty, you will attain heaven and also discharge the debt you owe to me, your master.

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And all of you should listen to this record read out on the day of the Tishyā constellation. Some of you may listen to it also on other suitable occasions on any day between two days of Tishyā. In case you do this, you will be able to accomplish your duty.

This record has been written here for the following purpose, viz. that the judicial officers of the city may strive to do their duty at all times and that the people within their charges suffer neither from unnecessary imprisonment nor from unnecessary harassment.

Hence I shall cause my Mahāmātras, who will be neither harsh nor fierce in temperament but will be gentle in action, to set out on tours of inspection, every five years, for the following purpose, viz. to ascertain if the judicial officers have realised this object of mine and are acting according to my instructions.

Similarly, from Ujjayinī also, the Prince Viceroy will send officers of the same class every year for the same purpose and will not allow three years to pass without such a mission being sent out on tour. In the same way, officers will be deputed from Takshaśilā also. When these Mahāmātras will set out on tours of inspection every year, then, without neglecting their normal duties, they will have to ascertain the following, viz. if the local judicial officers are acting according to the king's instructions.

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No. XVI

[*Jaugada Text*—This edict is found only at Dhauli and Jaugada. This is the second of the two records found at these places instead of Rock Edicts XI-XIII of the series occurring elsewhere.]

Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods.

The following royal order has to be addressed to the Mahāmātras stationed at Samāpā.

As regards whatever good I notice, I desire that I may carry it out by deeds and accomplish it by proper means. And I consider the following to be the principal means to this end, viz. to impart instructions to you.

All men are my children. Just as, in regard to my own children, I desire that they may be provided by me with all kinds of welfare and happiness in this world and in the next, the same I desire in respect of all men.

The following question may occur to the people of the unconquered territories lying beyond the borders of my dominions: 'What is the king's desire in respect of us ?' The following alone is my wish which should be realized by the peoples living on the borders, viz. that the king desires that they should be unworried on his account, that they should have confidence in him, and that they should expect from him only happiness and no misery. The following also should be realized by them, viz. that the king will forgive them in respect of any offence that is pardonable. My desire is that they should practise

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the duties associated with Dharma for my sake and that they should attain happiness in this world as as well as in the next.

Now, I instruct you for the following purpose, viz. that I may free myself from the debt I owe to the people inhabiting the lands beyond the borders of my dominions by having instructed you and informed you of my will as well as my unshakable resolution and vow.

Therefore, acting accordingly, you should perform your duties. You should also inspire the people of the bordering lands with confidence in me, so that they might realize that the king is to them even as their father, that he sympathises with them even as he sympathises with his own self, and that they are to the king even as his own children.

Having instructed you and informed you of my will as well as my unshakable resolution and vow, I feel that my appeal to you in this respect will be known to the people of the whole country. Indeed you are capable of inspiring them with confidence in myself and securing their welfare and happiness in this world and in the next. And, by so doing, you will attain heaven and discharge the debt you owe to me.

So, this record has been written here on stone for the following purpose, viz. that the Mahāmātras should strive to do their duty at all times in order to inspire the people living on the borders of my dominions with confidence in me and to induce them to practise the duties associated with Dharma.

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Therefore all of you should listen to this record read out on every Chāturmāsī day as well as on the day of the Tishya constellation. You may also listen to it on other days between two Tishya days. Some of you may listen to it even on any other occasion as it presents itself. And, by so doing, you will be able to accomplish your duties.

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C—CAVE INSCRIPTIONS

No. I

[This inscription is found in a rock-cut cave on the Barabar hills. It is now known as the Sudama Cave, although its original name was the Nyagrodha-guhā or 'Banyan Tree Cave'.]

This Nyagrodha cave is dedicated to the Ājīvikas by king Priyadarśī, twelve years after his coronation.

No. II

[This inscription is found in another cave on the same hills. It is now known as the Visva Jhopri Cave.]

This cave in the Skhalatika Hill is dedicated to the Ājīvikas by king Priyadarśī, twelve years after his coronation.

No. III

[This inscription is found in the third cave at the same place. It is now known as the Karna Chaupar Cave.]

When the period of nineteen years elapsed since the coronation of king Priyadarśī, this cave in the very pleasant Skhalatika is given by him for the stay of the ascetics beyond the reach of flood-waters during the rainy season.

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PART II

INSCRIPTIONS ON PILLARS

A—MINOR PILLAR EDICTS

No. I

[*Allahabad-Kosam Text*—Other versions of the edict are found at Sanchi and Sarnath.]

This is the order of the Beloved of the Gods.

The Mahāmātras stationed at Kauśāmbī are to be addressed in the following words.

I have made both the Saṅgha of the monks and the Saṅgha of the nuns united. No heretical monk should be admitted into the Saṅgha. Whosoever, be it a monk or be it a nun, shall break up the unity of the Saṅgha should be made to wear white robes unworthy of the order and to reside in what is not fit for the residence of a recluse.

[*Sanchi Text*—The beginning of the edict, which must have been addressed to the Mahāmātras stationed at Sanchi, is damaged.]

You should act in such a way that the Saṅgha cannot be divided by any heretical monk. Both the Saṅgha of the monks and the Saṅgha of the nuns have each been made by me a united whole to last as long as my sons and great-grandsons shall reign and the moon and the sun shall shine.

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The monk or nun, who shall break up the Saṅgha, should be made to put on white robes and to reside in what is not fit for the residence of a recluse.

For my desire is that the Saṅgha may remain united and flourish for a long time.

[*Sarnath Text*—The beginning of the edict, which was no doubt addressed to the Mahāmātras stationed at Sarnath, is damaged.]

You should act in such a way that the Saṅgha cannot be divided by any one. But verily that monk or nun, who shall break up the Saṅgha, should be compelled to put on white robes and to reside in what is unfit for the residence of a recluse. Thus should this order be communicated to the Saṅgha of the monks as well as to the Saṅgha of the nuns.

No. II

[This is in continuation of the Sarnath text of Minor Pillar Edict I. This edict has not been found elsewhere.]

Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods.

One copy of the above document has been deposited in your office, so that it would be accessible to you. And deposit ye another copy of this very document so as to make it accessible to the lay followers of the Buddha. Now, the lay followers should assemble near the document every fast day in order to be inspired with faith on account of this very èdict. Thus, invariably on every fast day, every Mahāmātra should go to the place for the fast-day service in order to be inspired with faith on account of this very edict and also to understand it.

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Further, you should set out on tour throughout the district under you with the implication of this edict in your minds. So too your subordinates must be sent by you on tour to all the tracts around fortified towns with the implication of this edict in their minds.

No. III

[This edict is found on the Allahabad-Kosam pillar and nowhere else.]

The Mahāmātras everywhere should be addressed in the following words of the Beloved of the Gods.

Whatever gift has been made here by my second queen, be it a mango-grove, or a garden, or an almshouse, or anything else, it should be specifically registered in the name of my second queen Chāruvākī who is the mother of Tīvara.

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B—PILLAR INSCRIPTIONS

No. I

[This inscription is found on the Rummindei Pillar.]

Twenty years after his coronation, king Priya-darśī, Beloved of the Gods, visited this spot in person and offered worship at this place, because the Buddha, the Sage of the Śākyas, was born here. He caused to be built a stone wall around the place and also erected this stone pillar to commemorate his visit. Because the Lord Buddha was born here, he made the village of Lumbinī free from taxes and subject to pay only one-eighth of the produce as land revenue instead of the usual rate.

No. II

[This inscription is found on the Nigali Sagar pillar.]

Fourteen years after his coronation, king Priya-darśī, Beloved of the Gods, enlarged the Stūpa enshrining the relics of the Buddha Kanakamuni to double its size. And twenty years after his coronation, he visited the spot in person, offered worship at the place, and caused this stone pillar to be erected.

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C—PILLAR EDICTS

No. I

[*Delhi–Topra Text*—Practically the same text of Pillar Edicts I-VI is found on the Delhi-Topra, Delhi-Meerut, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya-Nandangarh and Rampurva pillars.]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me twenty-six years after my coronation.

Happiness in this world and in the next is difficult to secure without intense love of Dharma, rigorous self-examination, implicit obedience to elders, great fear of sin and excessive zeal in the cause of Dharma. But verily, owing to my exhortation, this yearning for Dharma and love of Dharma have increased and will further increase among my people day by day. And my officers, whether of the superior, inferior or middle rank, are conforming to the practices of Dharma and practising the duties associated with Dharma and they are capable of stirring up others to do the same. The Mahāmātras in charge of the bordering districts are also acting in the same way. For these indeed are the rules for them, viz. governing the people according to Dharma, administering justice to them according to Dharma, causing happiness to them according to Dharma and protecting them according to Dharma,

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No. II

[*Delhi-Topra Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

The practices of Dharma are meritorious. But what does Dharma consist of? It consists of the least amount of sin, many virtuous deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness and purity.

Even the gift of eye-sight has been bestowed by me in various ways on criminals threatened by punishment.* To bipeds and quadrupeds as well as to birds and aquatic animals have I done various kinds of favour even upto the grant of life. And many other virtuous deeds have also been performed by me.

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me on stone for the following purpose, viz. that people may act according to it and that it may endure for a long time. And he, who will act thus, will do what is meritorious.

No. III

[*Delhi-Topra Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

A person has an eye on his good deed only and says to himself: 'This good deed have I done.' Not in the least does he notice his sin, saying to himself: 'This sinful act have I perpetrated,' or 'This indeed

*The eye-sight referred to here has been taken by many scholars in the sense of 'spiritual insight' which developed among the people as a result of their following Aśoka's religious instructions.

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is what is called sin.' But this is certainly difficult to scrutinize. Nevertheless, one should verily look into the matter thus: 'These passions surely lead to sin, such as violence, cruelty, anger, vanity and jealousy. Let me not ruin myself by reason of these very passions.' One should seriously reflect on the following: 'This one is for my good only in this world and the other one is for my good also in the next world.'

No. IV

[*Delhi-Topra Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me twenty-six years after my coronation.

The Rajjukas have been placed by me over many hundred thousands of souls among the people of my dominions. The award of rewards or the imposition of punishment by them has been placed by me under their sole control. Why? Because the Rajjukas should perform their duties with confidence and without fear and they should bring welfare and happiness to the people of the countryside and bestow favours upon them. They will acquaint themselves with what gives pleasure or pain to the subjects and exhort the inhabitants of the counry-side through persons who are devoted to Dharma, so that the people can attain happiness in this world as well as in the next.

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Of course, the Rajjukas are eager to serve me. They have also to obey the officers who know my wishes. And these officers will exhort some of the Rajjukas who may not know my wishes, so that the latter can please me.

Just as a person feels confident after having entrusted his child to an experienced nurse and thinks : 'The expert nurse is able to bring up my child well,' even so have I appointed the Rajjukas for the welfare and happiness of the country-people. The award of rewards or the infliction of punishment by the Rajjukas has been placed by me under their sole control in order that they should be free from fear and want of confidence and thus perform their duties with pleasure.

The following indeed is desirable, viz. that there should be impartiality in judicial proceedings and impartiality in punishment. And my order goes even so far that a respite of three days is granted by me to fettered persons in the prisons, who have been convicted and condemned to death. During that period, their relatives will plead for their life to some officers. Otherwise, they will console the persons who are going to die and bestow gifts in order to secure for them happiness in the next world and undergo fasts for the same purpose. Verily my desire is this that, even when the time for their living in this world has expired, they may attain happiness in the next world and that various kinds of the practice of Dharma, such as self-control and distribution of gifts, are promoted among the people.

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No. V

[*Rampurva Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Twenty-six years after my coronation, I have declared the following species of animals exempt from slaughter, viz. parrots, mainas, ruddy geese, wild geese, *nandīmukhas, gelāṭas*, bats, queen-ants, terrapins, boneless fish, *vedaveyakas, gaṅgāpupuṭakas*, skate-fish, tortoises and porcupines, leaf-hares, twelve-antler stags, bulls set at liberty, household vermin, rhinoceroses, white pigeons, village pigeons and all the quadrupeds which are neither useful nor edible.

Those she-goats, ewes and sows, which are either pregnant or milch, are not to be slaughtered, nor their young ones which are less than six months old. Cocks are not to be caponed. Husks containing living beings should not be burnt. Forests must not be burnt either uselessly or in order to destroy living beings. The living must not be fed with the living.

At the three Chāturmāsīs and at the full-moon of the month of Tishyā, for three days in each case, viz. the fourteenth and fifteenth of one fortnight and the first of the next, and invariably on every fast day, fish is exempt from slaughter and should not be sold. And on the same days, not only these but also other species of beings should not be killed in the elephant-forests and in the fishermen's preserves.

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On the eighth of each fortnight and on the fourteenth and fifteenth, on the Tishyā and Punarvasu days, on the three Chāturmāsī days and on every auspicious day, bulls are not to be castrated. And he-goats, rams, boars and such other animals as are usually castrated should not be castrated on those days. Horses and bullocks should not be branded on the Tishyā and Punarvasu days, on the Chāturmāsīs and during the fortnights associated with the Chāturmāsīs.

Upto the time when I completed twenty-six years after my coronation, the release of prisoners has been ordered by me for twenty-five times during the period in question.

No. VI

[*Rampurva Text*]

Thus saith king Priyadarsī, Beloved of the Gods.

Twelve years after my coronation, records relating to Dharma were caused to be written by me for the first time for the welfare and happiness of the people, so that, without violation thereof, they might attain the growth of Dharma in various respects.

Thinking: 'In this way only the welfare and happiness of the people may be secured,' I scrutinize as to how I may bring happiness to the people, no matter whether they are my relatives or residents of the neighbourhood of my capital or of distant localities. And I act accordingly. In the same manner, I scrutinize in respect of all classes of

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people. Moreover, all the religious sects have been honoured by me with various kinds of honours. But what I consider my principal duty is meeting the people of different sects personally.

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me twenty-six years after my coronation.

No. VII

[This edict is found only on the Topra pillar now at Delhi.]

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Those kings,who flourished in times past, had this desire : 'How can the people progress through the promotion of Dharma ?' But the people did not progress through an adequate promotion of Dharma.

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, on this point.

This thought occurred to me : 'In times past, kings desired as to how the people could progress through an adequate promotion of Dharma. The people, however, did not progress through an adequate promotion of Dharma. How can the people progress assuredly through an adequate promotion of Dharma ? How can I elevate them through the promotion of Dharma ?'

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods, on this point.

This thought occurred to me : 'I will cause proclamations of Dharma to be proclaimed and instructions in Dharma to be imparted. Hearing these, the people will conform to them, will be elevated

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and will progress considerably through the promotion of Dharma.'

For this purpose have I caused proclamations on Dharma to be proclaimed, and various kinds of instructions in Dharma have I ordered to be imparted, so that those officers of mine, who are placed by me over many people, will also preach and disseminate them. And the Rajjukas are placed by me over many hundred thousands of beings and they have also been ordered: 'Instruct the people who are devoted to Dharma in such and such a manner.'

Thus saith Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Having this very matter in view, I have set up pillars bearing records relating to Dharma, appointed Mahāmātras to deal with the affairs connected with Dharma and issued proclamations on Dharma.

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Banyan trees have been caused to be planted by me on the roads, so that they will offer shade to beasts and men. Besides, mango-groves have been caused to be planted by me for the same purpose. And I have caused wells to be excavated at intervals of eight Krośas, and rest-houses have also been caused to be constructed by me. Moreover, numerous watering sheds have been caused to be set up by me at different places for the enjoyment of beasts and men. This provision of enjoyment is, however, certainly a trifle. Because mankind has been blessed with many such comforts by former kings as well as by myself. But I have done this for the following purpose, viz. that people might conform to such practices of Dharma.

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Thus saith Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Those Dharma-Mahāmātras of mine are occupied with various kinds of activities which are beneficial both to ascetics and to householders. And they are occupied with all the religious sects. I have arranged that some of them will be occupied with the affairs of the Saṅgha. Likewise I have arranged that some of them will be occupied with the Brāhmaṇas and Ājīvikas. Similarly I have arranged that some of them will be occupied with the Nirgranthas. In the same way I have arranged that some of them will be occupied with various other religious sects. The different Mahāmātras are occupied especially with the affairs of the different religious sects. My Dharma-Mahāmātras are occupied not only with the communities referred to above but also with all the other sects not mentioned specifically.

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Those mentioned above and many other chief officers of mine are occupied with the delivery of the gifts of myself as well as of the queens. And, to all the members of my entire household, they are bringing, in various ways, reports regarding the worthy recipients of gifts both here and in all the quarters. And I have arranged that some of the officers shall be occupied with the delivery of the gifts of my sons and of other queen's sons, so that the noble deeds of Dharma and the practice of Dharma may be promoted. My intention is that the noble deeds of Dharma and the practice of Dharma, which consist of compassion, liberality,

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truthfulness, purity, gentleness and goodness, will thus be promoted among men.

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

Whatever good deeds I have performed, those the people have imitated and to those they are conforming. Thereby they have progressed and will progress further in respect of obedience to mother and father, obedience to elders, courtesy to the aged and courtesy to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas, to the poor and the distressed and even to slaves and servants.

Thus saith king Priyadarśī, Beloved of the Gods.

This progress of Dharma among men has been promoted by me only in two ways, viz. by imposing restrictions in accordance with the principles of Dharma and by exhortation. But, of these two, the restrictions relating to Dharma are of little consequence. By exhortation, however, Dharma has been promoted considerably. The restrictions relating to Dharma are, indeed, such as have been enjoined by me, viz. that certain animals are exempt from slaughter, and also the numerous other restrictions relating to Dharma that I have imposed.

The progress of Dharma among men has, indeed, been promoted by me considerably by exhortation in regard to the abstention from hurting any living being and abstention from killing any animal.

For the following purpose has this lithic record been prepared, viz. that it may last as long as my sons and great-grandsons shall reign and the moon and the sun shall shine and also that the people may

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conform to it. If a person conforms to this, happiness in this world and in the next will be attained by him.

This record relating to Dharma has been caused to be written by me twenty-seven years after my coronation.

Saith the Beloved of the Gods on this point.

This record relating to Dharma should be engraved on stone pillars and stone tablets, wherever they are available, in order that it may endure for a long time.

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APPENDICES

No. I

PROPER NAMES AND SANSKRITIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE TRANSLATIONS

A

Ājīvika—A religious sect of ancient India, which followed a teacher named Gośāla who was a contemporary of the Buddha.

Alikasundara—Alexander, Greek king of Epirus (272-255 B.C.) or of Corinth (252-244 B. C.). He was a contemporary of Aśoka.

Anāgatabhayāni—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

Andhra—A people living within the empire of Aśoka. They appear to have been occupying then a tract in the northern part of the Deccan.

Antikini, *Antekina*—Antigonas Gonatas (277-239 B.C.), Greek king of Macedonia. He was a contemporary of Aśoka.

Antiyoka—Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B. C.), Greek king of Western Asia. He was a contemporary of Aśoka.

Āryavāsāḥ—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

Aśoka, *Aśokarāja*—An emperor of the Maurya dynasty, who ruled in *circa* 272-232 B. C.

B

Bhoja—A people living within the empire of Aśoka. They appear to have lived in the Berar region of the Deccan and the adjoining parts of Western India.

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Brāhmaṇa—The name of a community occupying the highest rank in Indian society.

Buddha—The great founder of Buddhism, who flourished according to an old record in 566-486 B.C. but according to a Ceylonese tradition in 624-544 B. C.

C

Chapala—A scribe in Aśoka's service.

Chāruvākī—The name of Aśoka's second queen who was the mother of Prince Tīvara.

Chāturmāsī—The full-moon day of the months of Āshāḍha, Kārttika and Phālguna. It was regarded as an auspicious day.

Choḍa—The same as the Cholas who lived in Tanjavur-Tiruchirappalli region of the Madras State. Their territory lay outside Aśoka's empire.

D

Dharma—In Minor Rock Edict III, the word is used to indicate the doctrine of the Buddha, also called 'the True Dharma'. Elsewhere it generally means a code of morals preached by Aśoka probably following the teachings of the Buddha.

Dharma-Mahāmātra—The designation of a group of high officers belonging to the class styled Mahāmātra. The posts of the Dharma-Mahāmātras were created by Aśoka. These officers were in charge of affairs relating to the Dharma preached by Aśoka.

G

Gandhāra—A people living in the Rawalpindi-Peshawar region of West Pakistan. Their territory, known by the same name, lay within Aśoka's empire.

Gaṅgāpupuṭaka—An unidentified species of the biped or quadruped, which was exempted by Aśoka from slaughter.

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Gelāṭa—An unidentified species of the biped or quadruped, which was exempted from slaughter by Aśoka.

J

Jambūdvīpa—A name of the earth or that part of the earth which contained Bhāratavarsha. According to an ancient Indian convention, Aśoka's empire has in some cases been called 'the earth' or Jambūdvīpa.

K

Kaliṅgas—A people living on the coast of the Bay of Bengal with their headquarters at Tosalī (modern Dhauli in the Puri District of Orissa) in the age of the Mauryas. Their territory was known by the same name.

Kāmbojas—A people occupying some tracts in the wide area comprising West Pakistan and Afghānistan.

Kanakamuni—The Sanskrit form of the name of one of the 'former Buddhas' who are believed by the Buddhists to have flourished before Gautama the Buddha.

Kauśāmbī—An ancient city identified with modern Kosam in the Allahabad District of U. P.

Keralaputra—The designation by which the king of the Kerala country in the present Malayalam-speaking tract of South India was known. His dominions lay outside Aśoka's empire.

Krośa—A measure of distance equal to about two miles and a quarter.

L

Lumbinī—The name of a village which was the birth place of the Buddha. It stood on the site of modern Rummindei in the Nepalese Tarai.

M

Magadha—The name of the tract comprising the modern Patna-Gaya region of South Bihar.

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Mahāmātra—A class of high officers in Aśoka's service. There were several classes of the Mahāmātras, one of them being the Dharma-Mahāmātra.

Makā, *Magā*—Magas (*circa* 282-258 B. C.), Greek king of Cyrene in North Africa. He was a contemporary of Aśoka.

Mauneyasūtram—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

Munigāthā—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

N

Nābhaka—An unidentified people living within Aśoka's empire.

Nābhapaṅkti—An unidentified people living within Aśoka's empire.

Nandīmukha—A species of water birds, which was exempted by Aśoka from slaughter.

Nirgrantha—A religious sect following Vardhamāna also called Mahāvīra, Jina and Nirgrantha. The Nirganthas are the same as the Jains.

Nyagrodha—The name of a cave in the Barabar hills in the Gaya District of Bihar. It was dedicated by Aśoka to the Ājīvika monks.

P

Paitryaṇika—An unidentified people living within Aśoka's empire.

Pāṇḍya—A people living in the present Madurai-Ramanathapuram-Tirunelveli region of the Madras State. Their territory lay outside Aśoka's empire.

Pāṭaliputra—The name of an ancient city situated near modern Patna in Bihar. It was the capital of Aśoka's empire.

Paulinda, *Pulinda*—A people living in the region of the Vindhyas.

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Prādeśika—A class of officers in Aśoka's service. A Prādeśika probably ruled over a group of districts.

Priyadarśī—A name assumed by Aśoka.

Punarvasu—The name of a constellation of stars, regarded by Aśoka as auspicious probably because it was the star of the home province of the Mauryas.

R

Rāhulāvavādaḥ—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

Rajjuka—A class of officers in Aśoka's service. The Rajjukas were probably the governors of districts.

Rāshṭrika—A class of officers in Aśoka's service. The Rāshṭrikas were probably governors of parts of a district.

S

Śākya—A clan to which the Buddha belonged and was therefore called 'the Sage of the Śākyas'. They were a Himalayan tribe of Indo-Mongoloid origin like the Lichchhavis and Mauryas.

Samāpā—An old city in the Kaliṅga country, which was situated near the Jaugada hill in the Ganjam District of Orissa.

Sambodhi—The same as Mahābodhi or Bodhgayā in the Gaya District of Bihar. It is a holy place because the Buddha obtained Bodhi (i.e. perfect knowledge) at this place.

Saṅgha—The Buddhist Church. It is the name applied to the collective body or brotherhood of the Buddhist monks. The nuns also had their own Saṅgha.

Sātiyaputra—The designation of a king who ruled over a tract called Sātiya including parts of the present Malayalam-speaking area in South India. His territory lay outside Aśoka's empire.

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Skhalatika—The ancient name of the Barabar hills in the Gaya District of Bihar.

Śramaṇa—A Buddhist monk.

Stūpa—A Buddhist structure enshrining a relic.

T

Takshaśilā—An ancient city in the present Rawalpindi District of West Pakistan. It was the headquarters of the north-western province of Aśoka's empire.

Tāmraparṇī—An old name of Ceylon.

Tishya, Tishyā—The name of a constellation of stars regarded by Aśoka as auspicious probably because he was born under it. Another name of the constellation is Pushya or Pushyā. The month of Pausha, in which the full-moon falls on the said asterism, has also been called Tishya or Tishyā.

Tīvara—The name of Aśoka's son from his second queen Chāruvākī.

Tosalī—The name of the principal city of the province of Kaliṅga in Aśoka's empire. It has been identified with modern Dhauli near Bhubaneswar in the Puri District of Orissa.

Turamāya, Tulamāya—Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.), Greek king of Egypt. He was a contemporary of Aśoka.

U

Ujjayinī—Modern Ujjain in West Malwa in the present State of Madhya Bharat It was the headquarters of the western province of Aśoka's empire.

Upatishyapraśnaḥ—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

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V

Vedaveyaka—An unidentified species of the biped or quadruped, which was exempted by Aśoka from slaughter.

Vinayasamutkarshaḥ—The Sanskrit form of the name of a Buddhist religious text recommended by Aśoka to the monks and nuns as well as to the laity.

Y

Yavana—The name originally applied by the Indians to the Greek people. The inscriptions mention the Yavanas living within Aśoka's empire probably in Afghanistan. They also mention Antiyoka or Antiochus II Theos, lord of Western Asia, as the ruler of the Yavanas.

Yojana—A measure of distance equal to about nine miles.

Yukta—A class of officers in Aśoka's service. The Yuktas were probably governors of the subdivision of a district.

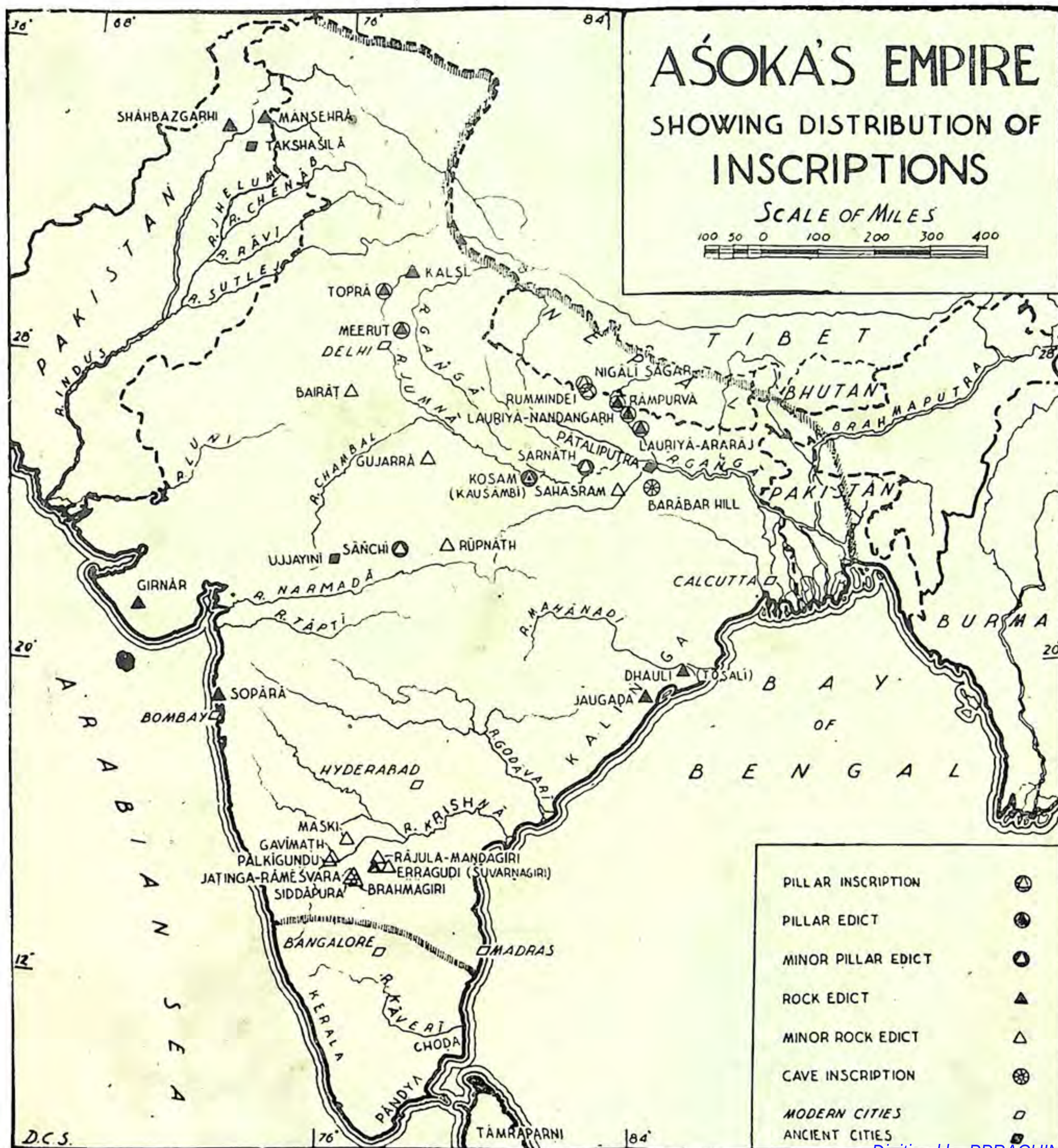
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